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Remembering Black Loyalists, Black Communities

Department of Education and Culture (to July 99)

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Nova Scotians will be able to learn more about the history of the province's Black Loyalists thanks to a grant from the Department of Canadian Heritage's Multiculturalism Programme.

The Nova Scotia Museum, in partnership with the Black Cultural Centre of Nova Scotia and the communities of Birchtown and Tracadie, will work to recover the Black Loyalist history in the two communities.

The $170,320 grant is one of the largest received by the Nova Scotia Museum for a single project. The Department of Education and Culture, through the Nova Scotia Museum, the Learning Resources and Technology Division, and the African Canadian Services Division, will contribute an equivalent level of support.

"We need this kind of research on African Nova Scotian history," said Robbie Harrison, Minister of Education and Culture. "The African Nova Scotian community has one of the longest histories and is one of the largest black communities in Canada. This history is to be gathered, developed and presented to the world in a way that ensures the heritage of the Black Loyalists assumes its rightful place in Nova Scotia's history."

In the summer and fall of 1783, the British army moved more than 2,000 Black Loyalists to Nova Scotia. It was the single, largest black immigration into Canada and included free people as well as those indentured, apprenticed or still enslaved.

Many Loyalists landed at Shelburne and later created their own community nearby in Birchtown. In Tracadie, a land grant to 74 immigrant families allowed the Loyalists to settle. Today, Birchtown and Tracadie have great potential as important archeological sites.

The project will focus on these communities and the lives Black Loyalists forged in Nova Scotia. Their stories, as well as those of other Black Loyalist immigrants who arrived in this province from 1782 to 1785, will be chronicled by examining existing documents, locating photographs and artifacts, and conducting an archeological search for evidence of early settlement.

Community members from Birchtown and Tracadie will work hand in hand with the Nova Scotia Museum during the two-year project. They will serve on the advisory group and assist museum staff with both the historical and archeological research and in developing exhibits about their communities.

The exhibits will be featured at the Black Cultural Centre and then in the communities of Birchtown and Tracadie. Ultimately, the information amassed by the project will be available to all

Nova Scotians and interested others. The project is expected to have a positive impact on the economies of both communities by increasing tourism from around Canada and the United States.

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